

CLAIMS:

1. A printer intercept apparatus interposed between a first system and a printer and operable to create a second signal which is identical to an original signal sent between the first system and the printer and to forward the second signal to a second system, the printer intercept apparatus comprising:

a parallel passthrough operable at a first end to receive the original signal and operable at a second end to release the original signal, wherein the first end is coupled with the first system and the second end is coupled with the printer;

an apparatus buffer operable to store the second signal; and

an interface operable to couple the apparatus buffer and the second system and to deliver the second signal to the second system.

2. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the parallel passthrough includes a first parallel connector at the first end and a second parallel connector at the second end.

3. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the printer includes a printer buffer having a print buffer capacity and the apparatus buffer is selected to have an apparatus buffer capacity greater than the print buffer capacity.

4. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the interface is an RS-232 serial interface.

5. The printer apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the interface is an RS-422 serial interface.

6. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the interface is an optically isolated interface.

7. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the interface is a network interface.

8. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first system is a personal computer.

9. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second system is a medication dispensing unit.

10. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, further including an interpreter operable to decode the second signal according to a predetermined communication mode prior to delivering the second signal to the second system.

11. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 10, wherein the predetermined communication mode is selected from the group consisting of: Compatibility Mode, Nibble Mode, Byte Mode, EPP, and ECP.

12. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 1, further including a processor operable to process the second signal prior to delivering the second signal to the second system.

13. A printer intercept apparatus interposed between a first system and a printer and operable to create a second signal which is identical to an original signal sent between the first system and the printer and to forward the second signal to a second system, the printer intercept apparatus comprising:

5 a parallel passthrough operable at a first end to receive the original signal and operable at a second end to release the original signal, wherein the first end is coupled with the first system and the second end is coupled with the printer;

10 an apparatus buffer operable to collect the second signal and to provide a high impedance input of the second signal;

an interpreter operable to receive the second signal from the buffer/driver and to decode the second signal according to a predetermined communication mode;

15 a processor operable to receive the second signal after decoding and to process the second signal for use by the second system; and

an interface operable to couple with the second system and to deliver the second signal to the second system following processing by the processor.

20 14. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the parallel passthrough includes a first parallel connector at the first end and a second parallel connector at the second end.

25 15. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the printer includes a printer buffer having a print buffer capacity and the apparatus buffer is selected to have an apparatus buffer capacity greater than the print buffer capacity.

30 16. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the interface is an RS-232 serial interface.

17. The print apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the interface is an RS-422 serial interface.

18. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the interface is an optically isolated interface.

19. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the interface is a network interface.

20. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the predetermined communication mode is selected from the group consisting of: Compatibility Mode, Nibble Mode, Byte Mode, EPP, and ECP.

21. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the first system is a personal computer.

22. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 13, wherein the second system is a medication dispensing unit.

23. A printer intercept apparatus interposed between a first system and a printer and operable to create a second signal which is identical to an original signal sent between the first system and the printer and to forward the second signal to a second system, the printer intercept apparatus comprising:

- a first connection coupled with the first system and operable to receive the original signal;
- a second connection coupled with the printer and operable to release the original signal;
- an apparatus buffer interposed between the first and second connections and operable to collect the second signal and to provide a high impedance input of the second signal;
- an interpreter operable to receive the second signal from the buffer/driver and to decode the second signal according to a predetermined communication mode;
- a processor operable to receive the second signal after decoding and to process the second signal for use by the second system; and
- an interface coupled with the second system and operable to deliver the second signal to the second system following processing by the processor.

24. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the printer includes a printer buffer having a print buffer capacity and the apparatus buffer is selected to have an apparatus buffer capacity greater than the print buffer capacity.

25. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the interface is an RS-232 serial interface.

26. The print apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the interface is an RS-422 serial interface.

27. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the interface is an optically isolated interface.

28. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the interface is a network interface.

29. The print intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the predetermined communication mode is selected from the group consisting of: Compatibility Mode, Nibble Mode, Byte Mode, EPP, and ECP.

30. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the first system is a personal computer.

31. The printer intercept apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the second system is a medication dispensing unit.